

# YOU AND YOUR Military Service

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In these days of uneasy peace, every young man in the United States is still subject to the call of his country for military service. When he reaches eighteen, it is necessary for him to register for possible draft into the armed services. What is the Christian attitude and responsibility in connection with all this?

There are three positions you may elect in regard to your military service. You may register and be classified as a combatant, eligible for any type of service in the Armed Forces. As such, you will be taught the use of arms and will be trained to kill your fellow man when necessary. You will be taught to hate your enemies in times of war.

Many Christians find no problem with this position, and sincere believers have fought in our Armed Forces with great valor and honor. However, some of them have a great deal of trouble reconciling the teachings of the Bible, such as "love your enemies," "do good to them that despitefully use you," "thou shalt not kill," and so forth, with this position and attitude.

At the other extreme is the position of the conscientious objector, who will have nothing to do with war or with serving in any way in the Armed Forces. He would rather go to jail than wear a military uniform or bear arms. Neither will he work in a defense plant, manufacture implements of war, or contribute in any way to the defense effort.

Many sincere Christians have taken this position, and our Government recognizes their right to do so. So in war times they have been sent to "C.O. Camps" in forestry service or some other militarily-unrelated activity. In peace times they are usually assigned to some humanitarian or church-related project. The Government provides no salary, allowance, or

support for conscientious objectors. Their needs must be provided by their own families or churches.

Many Christians however have difficulty with this position in the light of Bible teaching such as is found in Romans 13: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." "Render therefore to all their dues." They feel that allegiance to government requires more than this position allows, and yet do not wish to bear arms.

There is a third position that I believe to be most consistent with Christian faith and testimony. It is that of the noncombatant. When properly registered, the young man in this classification is inducted into the Armed Forces, wears the uniform of his country, receives training that will be valuable to him and to his service for his government, but is not required to receive training in the use of arms nor to bear them. The medical corps and the chaplaincy are the most noted of the noncombatant areas of military service, but they are not the only areas. A recruiting officer can tell you of other possibilities.

This position is consistent with Christian responsibility to government while being consistent with the teachings of the Lord Jesus concerning love for our enemies, and other portions of Scripture. It does not present the problems of conscience that are commonly found in the straight militarist position, and some times found in the position of the conscientious objector. It deserves your serious consideration when you contemplate your future in relation to Uncle Sam. This has been the position preferred, declared, and taught by The Brethren Church for decades.

Now suppose you prayerfully conclude that this is the position for you. What are the mechanics of

achieving this status? When you register, at the age of eighteen, no special procedure is required. But soon after, you will be sent or given a "classification questionnaire" to be completed. In this questionnaire, you may indicate a preference for non-combatant service or for conscientious objector status. In either case you'll receive "Selective Service Form 150," which is devoted to these two classifications. Half of it deals with non-combatant service, and the other half with "C.O." status. Fill it out properly and file it with your selective service board, and you will be classified accordingly. When and if you are drafted, you will be assigned to a noncombatant unit.

If you enlist, you may request noncombatant service and fill out the proper forms at that time if you have not already done so. It is difficult to change from military to non-combatant or from noncombatant to conscientious objector, but not difficult to go from "C.O." to noncombatant to straight military.

It does not become easy to live for Christ in any of these classifications, or in any type of military service. Remember, you must be a Christian first, and a "G.I." second. Keep your contact with heavenly headquarters strong through faithful Bible reading and prayer. Do not be ashamed of Christ—He was not ashamed to die for you. It takes a real man to be a Christian, and to faithfully follow his Biblical convictions. Be that man for His sake, and your own!

While you are forming your own convictions on the subject of military service, seek the counsel of your pastor. He has literature he can put in your hands that will enlighten and aid you. Books like Dr. L. S. Bauman's *The Faith*, and Dr. L. L. Grubb's booklet "We Believe," have excellent brief statements on this doctrine, generally known as the "doctrine of nonresistance." Dr. Herman Hoyt's book, *Then Would My Servants Fight* is entirely devoted to this doctrine in Scripture, and is excellent. If such counsel and literature is not available to you, write the Brethren Youth Council, Box 617, Winona Lake, Indiana, for assistance.